THE HISTORY OF Johnny Armstrong, OF WESTMORELAND.

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THE HISTORY OF Johnny Armstrong.

CHAP. I.

Of his following the Wars abroad in his youthful Days in the Holy Land, in which he learned the Art of Arms, and came off with Success. Of his settling at Gilnock-Hall, in Westmoreland, and the noble Entertainment he gave his Hundred and Sixty Men.

IN former times, when the wars were frequent between England and Scotland, before the two kingdoms were united by King James the first of England, and fifth of Scotland, the bordering counties, by reason of the inroads that were made, were sometimes governed by one, and sometimes by the other, so that during these contests, there happened to live in Westmoreland a brave man, named

Johnny Armſtrong, who made it his buſine s to keep up the ancient and laudable cuſtom of CHARITY, ſupplying the poor with cloaths and food, not denying to any that asked of him. So that for his liberality he was famed every where, and beloved by all, as well by the rich neighbours as his poor ones. And though he had no freehold eſtate, yet there was ſuch a providence upon his induſtry, which he uſed many ways; as in cloathing the naked, buying and ſelling foreſts of timber, breeding of cattle, and the like, that his ſtore greatly increased, inſomuch that a great many wondered how he could live at the rate he did, not well knowing how his income ſhould maintain him. For building a long hall on purpoſe, he had a table furniſhed with about eight ſcore men every day, whom he not only fed, but kept cloathed and maintained in all other matters, having horſes and arms upon an occaſion for the defence of his country, ready for them to mount; taking a great delight to exerciſe them, having been trained up in foreign countries in the military art, by fighting againſt the Turks and Saracens, for many years

in his youthful days, and having done great exploits, which made him by many people be ſtiled, the chief Champion all throughout the whole north countries, ſo that he kept his borders very much in awe. His manſion-houſe was called Gilnock-Hall, and is famed to this very day, upon account of his living there; there being ſmall houſes ſtanding in the ſame place, which carry the ſame name unto this day. However, the large ruins that ſtill continue, ſhew, That it has been a place of extraordinary great account in former times. For upon their digging pretty deep into the earth, the workmen diſcovered the foundation to be very ſpacious; and it hath been alſo reported for truth, that ſome of the men had the good luck to light upon ſome very ancient earthen pots, which were filled with the coin of divers Kings, who reigned a great number of years before, which money ſerved to enrich both them and their families; inſomuch, that it was called, Johnny Armſtrong's Bounty Money.—On theſe things he employed himſelf till he was forty years of age, without entering into matrimony, though ſeveral rich

offers of fair maidens were proposed unto him. However, about this time, he began to think of altering his condition, that he might get an heir to keep up the grandeur of his family, and transmit his illustrious name down to posteriety; he being descended from a very ancient and honourable family, some of whose posterity are living at this day.

CHAP. II.

Of his being settled and living gallantly; of his falling in Love with a Gentleman's Daughter; of the splendid Entertainment he made; and of his being taken for the King.

HIS thoughts concerning his entering into the state of matrimony was no sooner made known to the world, but out of the generous respect which the gentry and others in that country had for him, many suitable matches were by them recommended to him. But as for riches he did not regard them; but relying on the bounties of Providence, he resolved to chuse one that was both inge-

pious, virtuous and handsome; therefore it was not long before he saw one, as he was passing through a neighbouring market town, that he imagined he could fancy. And, upon a strict enquiry, found she was a gentleman's daughter, though of a mean fortune, her father being fallen to decay, by the great losses that he had sustained by the raging war between the two nations.

But this made no difference between them, so that the gentleman was exceeding well pleased that he had procured so grand a match for his daughter. And Johnny Armstrong was as well satisfied that he had met without a sufficiency of beauty to please him.

The day of marriage being appointed, he promised to come and marry her, and then take her home to his house. In order to the affecting of which, he new dressed his eight score men with the finest purple, interlaid very beautifully with gold and silver lace, with silver hilted swords, embroidered belts, gilded spurs, and plumes of white feathers in their bonnets.

Thus being moſt bravely mounted, he rode, richly dreſſed, at the head of them, ſo that the people through all the town as he paſſed, taking him for the King, with one accord run before him, throwing up their hats and ſhouting: Nor could they hardly be perſuaded by himſelf to the contrary.

His fair miſtreſs was likewiſe of their opinion, when looking out of the window, upon his looking at the gate, and ſeeing her father's houſe ſurrounded by ſo gallant a company, ſuppoſing it to be the King who had been a hunting, and ſo came for refreſhment, ran and called her father, and ſaid, The King was come to viſit him.

God forbid! ſaid her father, what can we do then? we ſhall be undone; for all the proviſions for thy wedding dinner will not be a mouthful for them. Indeed the houſe ſeems very fair and handſome on the outſide, though my mean circumſtances can allow but ſhort commons within; Go down and tell them I am not at home, I am ſick, or any thing to put them off; for it is better ſo than to entertain them, when we cannot do it; it is better to ſtrain

compliment than to be disgraced, or at last to fast a long time after.

She then went down stairs, and peeping through the wicket, demanded of them Why they came unto her father's poor house? To which Johnny Armstrong replied, I am come to make you my wife. So knowing his voice, and looking wishfully at him, she could not believe him till he alighted and saluted her, saying, I am thy Johnny Armstrong. Upon that she threw open the gates, conducted him in, and then ran up stairs to tell their business; when her father came down immediately; but when he saw his train he blessed himself! desiring to know why he had brought such a number of men? But on being told there were no more than what usually attended him; his wonder still more encreased; for though he had heard that he relieved abundance of poor people yet he could not believe he kept so many in that garb.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of his Marriage, and the noble Entertainment he made; the Number of his Servants and Attendants; and of his inviting the whole Country.

NOW matters being at this pass, the pages had the care of the horses, and the men alighted to refresh themselves. Though all the liquors were not half a morning's draught for them; which made the old gentleman her father conclude, that this would be a fast day instead of a feast-day.

But while these fears and doubts shook him as though he had been struck with the palsy, all on a sudden arrived Johnny Armstrong's cooks and scullions, wenty three in number, with a large caavan of all sorts of provisions, readyto dress. After them his butlers, beng eight, with another caravan of wine, cyder, ale, and other liquors. So the

it appeared when it was taken out to be a plenty ſufficient to have ſupplied any city againſt a ſiege. So to work went the cooks, while he and his intended bride, being bravely mounted, rode away to be married, attended by a train of eight ſcore men, to the church, making ſuch a grand and magnificent ſhow as that place had never ſeen before. Then people having got intelligence of it, far and near came to be ſpectators; ſome giving out, that Squire Leonard's daughter had married the King; for as he came out of the church, he gave an hundred marks to be diſtributed among the poor, which they imagined none but a King could do.

When they were come home, after the wine of divers nations had paſſed very briſkly about, they found the tables covered with all manner of varieties that the ſea, earth, or air could afford, ſuch as fowls, fiſh, fleſh, fruits, and other dainties; and yet above one half was not brought in; ſo that they were obliged, for want of room in the houſe, to have tables ſpread in the court yard, for the

Porter was commanded to make proclamation that all comers were welcome that day. And thus till night they drank and feasted plentifully, and then came in musick, and a masquerade to divert them till bed time; but there not being lodging for the fortieth part of them, the house was kept open all night. Johnny Armstrong finding the ill-convenience of staying there any longer, took leave of his father-in-law the next morning conveying home his bride in great state, and supplying his father's wants upon all occasions.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of his carrying his Bride home, where she is elegantly entertained; of his having several Encounters with the Old Scots: and a War arising between the two Nations, after the Battle of Bannocks Bourn, all Westmoreland fell into their Hands.

BEING now at home, he settled all things in that country, so much to the satisfaction of the King of England, that his Majesty sent him his thanks for the care he had taken in protecting passengers from the robbers and thieves, and likewise from the plundering Scots, whom he had many times made to go short home; for they abominably hated him, and many times laid their designs to entrap him, but he always having his guard of merry, blue blades with him, always came off with flying colours. And during these transactions, his wife was delivered of a fine boy, which very much rejoiced his parents hearts, for holding a

feaſt at his chriſtening, all the country were welcome; ſo that the fame thereof rang both far and near.

In the midſt of their joy he had a private information, that a party of ſoldiers were coming within ten miles of his ſeat, ravaging and plundering the whole country, ſo that the inhabitants fled before them. On this he and his men mounted their ſteeds, and went and gave them battle, and ſoon overthrew them with ſo terrible a ſlaughter, as but few of them returned to Carliſle, which old garriſon the Scots held in thoſe days, to tell their defeat.

Theſe, and ſuch like encounters and depredations, cauſed an open war to be declared between the two nations, which had been over for ſome time until King Edward of England marched againſt Scotland, and entered it with a mighty army but very ill diſciplined. For the Scotch hiſtorians tell us, there were an hundred thouſand, beſides women, ladies, and other ſervants, many carrying their whole families with them to ſettle, when Scotland was overcome. But fortune was againſt the Engliſh, for in one battle at

a place called Bannock's Bourn, Robert the Scotch King utterly vanquished them with a much ſmaller number, killing upwards of ten thouſand of them, with the Earl of Glouceſter, and two hundred Knights and Squires. On the Scotch ſide about ſix thouſand were killed, with a great number of Noblemen and Gentlemen. So that they ſtill purſuing their conqueſts won all Cumberland and Weſtmoreland,

Our famous Johnny Armſtrong was not at this battle, but he was ſtruck with the greateſt admiration and ſurpriſe, and would fain have perſuaded the retreating Engliſh, unto whoſe aſſiſtance he was immediately comming, to rally again and face the enemy. But wanting a warlike Prince to lead them, it proved ineffectual: and he found himſelf conſtrained to become a ſubject to the King of Scotland or leave his fine habitation; which his father-in-law would perſuade him to do: But all their ſolicitations proved ineffectual. The father told him, That conſidering how much he had done againſt that nation, he might well expect that now it was in their power they would

remember him. But he being of an undaunted resolution, told them what he had done was according to the laws of nations, and what every generous enemy could not but approve of. Besides, in a very little time all might be won back by the English, and that neither fear nor terror should make him remove from a place which he so dearly loved.

The words put them to silence, and he still went on keeping open house, and

doing all the kind offices that lay in his power, even to the meaner people of either nation, without difference, as no exceptions might be taken, or he be charged with partiality.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

He being perſuaded to leave Giltrock-Hall, refuſes it for many Reaſons; and great Commotions ariſing by the landing of the Danes, &c. he is ſuſpected by a falſe Accuſation. The King invites him to Endinburgh, and he promiſes to go.

DURING theſe troubles, the Danes and Red Shanks, two bloody Northern nations, made great havock in the Weſtern iſles of Scotland, where they had landed; and with them joined ſome of the diſcontended Scots, as well n blemen as others; ſo that the King knew not whom to truſt; thoſe whom he moſt relied on proving moſt treacherous.

This vexed him, and made him ſuſpicious of his friends, of whom he impriſoned a vaſt number. Then he ſent for the nobility to come and join him; but they all refuſed, leſt they were making preparations to recover what they had lo

fully loſt, or for fear they ſhould be conſtrained to join the Northern enemy; to whom flocked a great many outlaws and idle perſons, who ſuppoſed, that in the amidſt of ſpoil and plunder, they ſhould be enriched with the goods and chattles of others.

Their proceedings made many Nobles refuſe to come to him, for fear they ſhould be put in priſon, as others had been before. This made him clap his hand on his breaſt, and looking wiſhfully on thoſe that were around him, with a deep ſigh, he ſaid, O! then is Scotland ſo full of treachery, that never a man, from the higheſt to the loweſt degree, dares appear before the King, when he ſends for him to make his appearance.

Hereupon the Officer of the houſhold ſtanding up, and then bowing low, ſaid, May it pleaſe your Majeſty, there is one named Johnny Armſtrong, in Weſtmoreland, a valiant and truſty man, whom I doubt not but will do you infinite ſervice. What is he? ſaid the King, with reſpect to eſtate? Why, replies the officer, he lives ſplendidly, gives noble entertainments to all comers, and yet I never

heard he had any land to maintain it. Then, ſaid the King, he muſt live by robbery and plunder, of which there are too many already in the kingdom: But does he keep any men to attend him? Yes, ſaid the other, he always maintains eight ſcore gallant fellows, bravely accoutred, and when he goes any where abroad they ride with him, well armed and mounted.

Whilſt this diſcourſe laſted, in come a lord, who Armſtrong and his men had before routed at the battle of Bannock-Bourn, retook numbers of cattle, which had been taken from the Engliſh, and afterwards challenged him to a ſingle combat, but he durſt not anſwer him. The King aſked him, If he knew one Johnny Armſtrodg of Weſtmoreland, and what he was? Know him, ſaid he, yes; and ſo do all your poor ſubjects on the other and this ſide the Tweed. He has been a bitter enemy to this country, and is like to be ſo again, when the Engliſh, who I hear are preparing, make an attempt upon it. And unleſs your Majeſty can get him into your hands, and deſtroy him, and the reſt of the rebels he

keeps your new conqueſts cannot be ſecured to you.

This malicious reported ſo much incenſed the King againſt this juſt and brave man, that he reſolved, if poſſible, his deſtruction, without ever conſulting farther, propoſing to go with all his force and fall on him immediately. But that was objected againſt, leſt upon notice of their march, ſhe ſhould retire into the Engliſh territories, and ſo become a more implacable enemy. Therefore it was reſolved he ſhould be invited to Edinburgh under pretence of friendſhip, and then he and his train might be cut off without much reſiſtance. Hereupon the King wrote the following letter unto Johnny Armſtrong:

"We having heard much of thy fame, could do no leſs at this time than take notice of one that is ſo greatly beloved by the common people, and may be ſerviceable to us, when things ſo badly, therefore I will not command, but earneſtly deſire you on ſight of his letter, to repair to our city of Edinburgh, with your attendants, where you ſhall be hear-

tily welcome. And for your ſafe conduct this our letter, with our royal word and ſolemn promiſe, ſhall be to you a ſufficient pledge and ſecurity.

ROBERT, Rex.

This letter was ſealed with the King's own ſignet, which he received as he came from hunting, and having highly treated the meſſenger, and giving him his promiſe, he diſmiſſed him.

CHAP. VI.

Johnny Armſtrong goes to Edinburgh, bravely attended with his eight ſcore Men, notwithſtanding many Preſages to forbid it. His Diſcourſe with the King; with the bloody Battle fought by him and his eight-Score Men, who were all ſlain but his Page; and of his little Son's promiſing to revenge his Father's Death.

THE valiant Johnny Armſtrong being at this invitation a little puzzled, to think what was the reaſon, and

asked the opinions of his friend; but as they were as ignorant as himself, and as he had promised to go, they concluded, all but his wife, that it would be convenient to go.

His commands were not disputed, for in the morning they rose with the sun; and immediately put themselves in array to march; when on a sudden the grand luminary, that shone so bright at his ascending the horizon, was overcast, and thunder began to rumble in the air; however, there being some signs of it clearing up, he resolved to set forward; but coming to take leave of his beloved wife and son, and giving them many kisses and embraces, all on a sudden he turned melancholy, without being able to give any reason for it; but his wife's intreaties, and his son's tears could not stay him.

Thus they parted, as they hoped for a short time.

The King no sooner had notice of it, but he placed his guards to be ready at the first onset; but when he came to see him so nobly attended, he fancied it was a foreign Prince come to pay him a vi-

ſit: Wherefore, upon his low bowing, the King moved his bonnet to him in a moſt courteous manner; but he was no ſooner certain it was him, but he called him a Villain, Traitor, Enemy to Scotland, and much more of this unexpected language. Johnny Armſtrong bending one knee to the ground, asked pardon if he had offended his Majeſty; and deſired to know to what end he was ſent for, tendering his ſervice, if it would be accepted. No traitor, replied he, I need not thy ſervice, and as for my fair promiſes, they were only to decoy you and your neſt of thieves hither. ——At this the Engliſhman riſing up unconcerned, without fear, ſaid, He could juſtify himſelf and his men, in reſpect to the falſe report his Majeſty had received of him and his men. Upon this, encouraging his men to take example by him, he drew his ſword, and ſtruck at the King with ſuch a fury, that he had taken off his head, had he not avoided it by falling to the ground. Armſtrong's men ſeeing him engaged, immediately drew, and laid about them, ſo that all the place was ſlippery with the blood; while the

cry arose through all the city, as if they had been taken by storm.——So that at last, three thousand more coming upon him, the heroic Armstrong being tired with the loss of blood, fell to the ground, but calling to his men, encouraged them to fight on, for after he had bled a little he would rise and fight again. This made them like enraged lions, so that heaps of dead bodies barred up the way.——The King in the mean time retired to a strong hold for shelter, and of all Johnny Armstrong's party only a little page escaped to tell the dismal news.

The mourning of his wife and the country for his untimely fall, was more than can be expressed. Armstrong's little son, sitting upon his mother's knee vowed to revenge his father's death when he became a man; which he gallantly performed.

FINIS.